



MarketWATCH

Cattle producers work through volatile markets

By Ben Herrold

Iowa Farmer Today

Cattle producers continue to try to navigate volatile markets. University of Tennessee Ag Economist Andrew Griffith said some sectors of the overall cattle market have moved against seasonal trends, and some have followed the trends.

“The calf market is moving contraseasonally this week while slaughter cow and bull markets are following a seasonal tendency,” Griffith said. “It has become increasingly difficult to predict the direction of cattle prices in the current environment.

“The probability of predicting an exact price of cattle is practically zero and has always been that way. However, the probability of predicting the direction of price movement was never less than 33.3% because prices can only do one of three things including increasing, decreasing or stay the same. Generally, predicting the direction of cash cattle prices was greater than one out of three, because a person could count on seasonal tendencies and market fundamentals to lead the thought process.”

He said even with the volatility, the fundamental

picture remains important, and some seasonal tendencies can still play a role. But news surrounding cattle markets have had an impact.

“This is not to say market fundamentals and seasonal tendencies have been thrown out with the bath water,” Griffith said. “Rather, the market appears to be dominated by policy maker statements, futures trading, domestic and international political unrest, input market disruptions and environmental conditions. These factors and likely others, are influencing how market participants view the outlook of the industry.”

He said it can be very difficult to time the market, but an overall marketing and risk management plan can help producers navigate the market changes.

“With this thought in mind, many producers with spring-calving cow herds have a decision to make as they approach weaning and marketing,” Griffith said.

“Many producers will attempt to time the market in some form or fashion, and hitting the top will be a factor of luck, having cattle ready to market, and the blessings of the Good Lord. For all other producers that are not attempting to time the market, now is a good time to consider what management and marketing practices can be employed to capture cattle value.”

PRICE COMPARISONS

Week ending Oct. 19	10/18/2026	9/20/2026
Prices mostly cwt.		
CATTLE: National		
65-80% Ch. steers wt. avg.	\$350.00	\$350.00
Average estimate weights	1,454	1,448
Boxed Ch.600-900 lb.	\$371.58	\$371.94
Boxed Sel. 600-900 lb.	\$359.91	\$353.26
Avg. price Choice steer		
Live basis	N/A	N/A
Dressed basis	N/A	N/A
Feeder steers, river markets		
550-600 lbs.	\$424.80	\$390.14
700-750 lbs.	\$355.92	\$336.21
HOGS: Interior Iowa		
Iowa/Minn. direct wtd. avg.	N/A	\$83.16
Average estimate weights	290.7	285.9
Sows 1-3 300 lb. & up avg.	\$64.74	\$65.23
Pork loins 13-19 lb.	\$81.45	\$87.17
Wholesale carcass	\$80.24	\$87.63
Early weaned 10 lb. avg. price	\$36.94	\$45.57
Feeders 40 lb. avg. price	\$43.10	\$47.64
EGGS: Grade A Large/d	\$0.13	\$0.47

HAY PRICES

Week ending Oct. 13

Prices gathered by IFT Publications from USDA information.

USDA Market News Iowa Hay Summary

Alfalfa 3x3 sq., premium	\$120.00
Alf/Grass 3x3 sq., premium	\$240.00
Grass 3x4 sq., premium	\$120.00
Straw/Rye, lg sq..	\$60.00

Dyersville, prices per ton:

Dry cow/heifer lg. sq.	\$275.00
Dry cow/heifer rd. bale	\$205.00
Grass lg. sq.	\$222.50
Grass rd. bale	\$175.00
Wheat straw 3x4 sq.	\$225.00

Fort Atkinson, prices per ton:

Grass rounds	\$115.00
2nd Crop rds.	\$130.00
3rd Crop rds.	\$115.00
4th Crop, rds.	\$130.00

Edgewood Livestock, prices per ton:

3rd Crop Alfalfa 3x3 Lg. Squares	\$280.00
3rd Crop Alfalfa Mixed 3x3 Lg. Rds	\$160.00
Small Square Hay 3x3	\$2.25-7.50

Rock Valley, prices per ton:

Alfalfa lg sq., premium/supreme	\$230.00
Alfalfa lg rds., premium/supreme	\$240.00

MIDWEST SHEEP AND GOAT MARKET Oct. 14

Slaughter kids (55 lbs.)	\$420.00
Slaughter nannies/does (133 lbs.)	\$260.00
Slaughter ewes (90 lbs.)	\$215.00
Slaughter bucks/billies (95 lbs.)	\$260.00
Slaughter wethers (79 lbs.)	\$440.00

Average prices gathered from USDA information. Prices per cwt.

DIRECT DELIVERED FEEDER PIGS Oct. 16

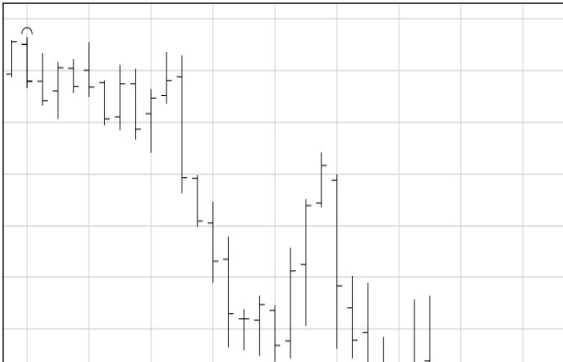
	Head	Cash Range	Cash wt. Avg
10-12 lbs	21,626	\$22.59-55.36	\$36.94
40 lbs	11,655	\$31.00-55.00	\$43.10

Prices are quoted on a per head basis delivered to the buyer's farm. These prices include freight and fees.

LIVESTOCK FUTURES

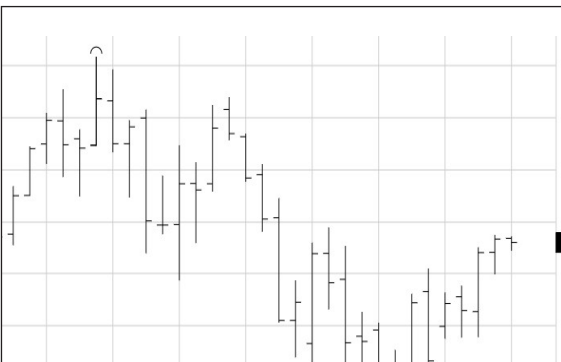
Find livestock futures quotes and links to charts on [AgUpdate.com](https://bit.ly/2HpdVcB) at <https://bit.ly/2HpdVcB>.

Oct Lean Hogs CME H=\$67.35 L=\$66.97 Oct. 19



Source: www.barchart.com

Dec Live Cattle CME H=\$227.55 L=\$226.30 Oct. 19



Source: www.barchart.com

SLAUGHTER/FEEDER CATTLE

Week ending Oct. 19

Midwest Direct Slaughter

Negotiated cash trade was active on very good demand as of Oct. 19. Boxed beef prices Oct. 19 averaged \$371.58. That is down 73 cents from the previous report. The Choice/Select spread was \$11.67. Negotiated cash slaughter cattle on a national basis on Oct. 19 totaled about 90,762. Last week's total was 67,701 head.

Live Steer: 65-80% Choice	n/a
Dressed Steer: 65-80% Choice	\$350.00

Iowa Direct Feeder Cattle

Steers: Medium and Large 1	n/a
Heifers: Medium and Large 1	n/a